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StormReady Organization and Operations Manual

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<u>Table of Contents</u>	<u>Page</u>
1.0 StormReady Overview	1
2.0 StormReady Advisory Board Organization	2
2.1 National StormReady Advisory Board	2
2.2 Regional StormReady Advisory Board	3
2.3 Local StormReady Advisory Board	3
3.0 StormReady Application Process	4
3.1 Application Submission	4
3.2 StormReady Verification Visit	5
3.3 StormReady Board Review	5
3.4 The Recognition Process	6
3.5 Recognition Ceremony	6
4.0 Insurance Services Organization	6
5.0 Recognition Monitoring	7
6.0 Re-Recognition	7
Appendices:	
A StormReady Population-Based Guidelines	A-1
B StormReady Application Form	B-1
C StormReady Site Visit Form	C-1
D StormReady Ceremony Agenda Example	D-1

Section 1.0

StormReady Overview

Many laws and regulations have been created to help local emergency managers deal with hazardous material spills, search and rescue operations, medical crises, etc., but there are relatively few uniformly-recognized guidelines dealing with the specifics of hazardous weather response operations. Recognizing this need, the National Weather Service (NWS), has designed a program to help cities, counties, and towns implement procedures to reduce the potential for disastrous, weather-related, consequences. By participating in this program, called “StormReady”, local agencies can earn recognition for their jurisdiction by meeting guidelines established by the NWS in partnership with federal, state, and local emergency management professionals. The StormReady program is intended to:

- , Improve the timeliness and effectiveness of hazardous weather warnings for the public.
- , Provide detailed and clear recommendations by which local emergency managers may establish/improve effective hazardous weather operations.
- , Help local emergency managers justify costs and purchases related to supporting their hazardous weather-related program.
- , Reward local hazardous-weather mitigation programs that have achieved a desired performance level.
- , Provide a means of acquiring additional Community Rating System points assigned by the Insurance Services Organization (ISO).
- , Provide an “image incentive” to counties, cities, and towns that can identify themselves as being “StormReady”
- , Encourage the enhancement of hazardous weather preparedness programs in jurisdictions surrounding “StormReady” Communities and Counties.

StormReady is a voluntary program, and is being offered as a means of providing guidance and incentive to officials interested in improving their respective hazardous weather operations. **Implied or explicit references to “requirements” are made with regard to the voluntary participants in the StormReady program and should not be construed as being state or federal mandates.**

Section 2.0

StormReady Advisory Board Organization

Implementation and oversight of the StormReady program is completed through the formation of StormReady Advisory Boards. Advisory boards shall be set up on a national, regional and local basis.

Section 2.1

National StormReady Advisory Board

The National StormReady Advisory Board is responsible for general oversight of the StormReady program. The primary mission of the national board is to maintain a “minimum” set of recognition guidelines that is consistent across the country with regard to technology, while at the same time allowing for local flexibility in terms of planning and preparedness activities.

Existing and proposed guidelines are reviewed at the National StormReady Advisory Board’s annual meeting, with updated guidelines formally published by the board on or before October 1st of each federal fiscal year.

The National StormReady Advisory Board is comprised of:

- NWS Warning Coordination Meteorologist (WCM) Program Leader (NWSH)

- NWS Eastern Region WCM Program Leader

- NWS Southern Region WCM Program Leader

- NWS Central Region WCM Program Leader

- NWS Western Region WCM Program Leader

- NWS Alaska Region WCM Program Leader

- NWS Pacific Region WCM Program Leader

- President (or designee) of the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA)

- President (or designee) of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM)

Section 2.2

Regional StormReady Advisory Board

Each of the NWS's six regional offices shall establish Regional StormReady Advisory Board. Team membership shall be determined by the Regional Director.

Regional StormReady Advisory Boards shall monitor the activities of local boards and ensure the spirit of the national guidelines are maintained. Regional boards also collect and review proposed guideline change recommendations received from the Local StormReady Advisory Boards. Recommendations for change to the national guidelines shall be forwarded to the National StormReady Advisory Board for consideration.

Section 2.3

Local StormReady Advisory Board

The Local StormReady Advisory Board has great authority to enhance StormReady to fit local and state situations. Local StormReady Advisory Boards may be set up either on a WFO or Statewide basis. Each local board shall consist of at least:

- 1 - NWS office Meteorologist in Charge.
- 1 - NWS office Warning Coordination Meteorologist.
- 1 - State emergency management agency director or designee. *
- 1 - Local emergency management association president or designee.*

* One per state if local board is WFO based with multi-state responsibility.

The Local StormReady Advisory Board is responsible for all steps leading to the recognition of the StormReady community or county. This includes developing by-laws for the board's activities, localization of the national guidelines, establishing procedures for verification visits, and implementing procedures for application review.

Section 3.0

StormReady Application Process

Application for StormReady recognition is a formal process requiring a written application, verification visit(s), local board action, and recognition.

Section 3.1

Application Submission

Any county or community desiring to be considered for StormReady recognition should prepare a written application following the categories outlined in Appendix B and submit it to the appropriate NWS office.

Some applicants will have jurisdiction over both a community and the unincorporated areas of the surrounding county. In these cases, a single application is sufficient, with the combined populations used as a basis for determining the appropriate guideline categories.

While much of the application is a basic accounting of technology, a brief narrative describing aspects of preparedness and planning activities is necessary and will aid in assessing such things as the hazardous weather plan, exercises and public safety programs.

The application will be duplicated by the local StormReady Advisory Board Chairperson and provided to each board member. The StormReady Chairperson shall assign a team to visit the applicant and formally discuss the application.

Section 3.2

StormReady Verification Visit

A verification team of no less than 2 members shall be assembled by the StormReady Chairperson to visit an applicant. The verification team should be composed of, at a minimum, one NWS person and one emergency manager. StormReady verification team members should be StormReady Advisory Board members, or other individuals deemed qualified to make an assessment by the Local StormReady Advisory Board.

During the verification visit, a Site Visit Summary (Appendix C) shall be completed separately and signed by each member of the verification team. During the site visit, a review of the applicant's hazardous weather plan will occur. This review may require the applicant to explain procedures to ensure that the content meets StormReady Guidelines. A full copy of the applicant's Hazardous Weather Plan does not need to be submitted to the StormReady Advisory Board; however, the verification team may request a copy for further offsite review.

Upon completing a site visit, the verification team shall forward to the Local Advisory Board their Site Visit Summaries, along with any additional comments or documentation deemed pertinent.

Section 3.3

StormReady Board Review

The Local StormReady Advisory Board shall review a jurisdiction's application and associated site visit summaries at the local boards next regularly scheduled meeting after the site visit. The local StormReady Advisory Board may approve an application for recognition after this first review.

If the recognition is not approved, the local board shall provide written guidance on improvements needed to achieve recognition. Upon written response from the applying jurisdiction, a subsequent StormReady verification visit and local board review shall be scheduled. If a community disputes a decision made by the local advisory board, the dispute shall be forwarded to the Regional StormReady Advisory Board for resolution.

Section 3.4

The Recognition Process

When in the opinion of the StormReady Advisory Board an applicant has met the guidelines for recognition, the local board has the authority to grant recognition. Notification of a recognition shall be given to the National and Regional Advisory Boards.

The successful applicant will receive a formal notification letter from the appropriate NWS Meteorologist in Charge, two StormReady signs suitable for display along roadways, authorization to use the StormReady logo, instructions for acquiring additional roadway signs, and information concerning the notification of the Insurance Services Organization (ISO) for possible adjustment to insurance rates (Section 3.8).

Recognition shall be for a period of two years from the date of the formal announcement.

Section 3.5

Recognition Ceremony

Details of the recognition announcement and ceremony shall be coordinated between the applicant and the NWS office which has responsibility for the community or county.

A typical ceremony would require a formal media announcement and should be a combination of the unveiling of the StormReady roadway signs and a subsequent press conference. See Appendix D for a sample ceremony program.

Section 4.0

Insurance Services Organization (ISO)

Recognized jurisdictions participating in the National Flood Insurance Program can receive Community Rating Points towards lowering flood insurance rates. StormReady communities / counties should forward a copy of their recognition letter to their ISO representative for details.

Section 5.0

Recognition Monitoring

While a formal plan to monitor a recognized jurisdiction is not presently deemed necessary, if a formal concern is brought to the StormReady Advisory Board, the local board shall review the concern and holds the option to suspend the recognition for 60 days while a review is conducted.

If the local board review indicates the community or county no longer meets StormReady guidelines, it will request the road signs be removed. A written notification shall be made to the ISO informing them of the action.

Section 6.0

Re-Recognition

StormReady recognitions are valid for two years from the date of the formal announcement / ceremony. The Local StormReady Advisory Board shall, six months prior to the expiration of the recognition, notify recognized jurisdictions in writing of their need to re-apply. Applicable guidelines shall be those published at the time of the notification.

It is the goal of the Local StormReady Advisory Board to maintain an atmosphere of constant improvement, and strive to keep the evaluation guidelines representative of the advancing technology and techniques.